

NEWS

The Crowell Corp. Celebrates 100th Anniversary

By Herbert B. Adelman, president

The Crowell Corp., Newport, Del., the oldest existing gummed-tape manufacturer in the U.S., is celebrating its 100th anniversary during 2006. The company manufactures a complete line of gummed sealing tapes and cohesive products and systems.

[Some of the succeeding history found on the Internet at www.fundinguniverse.com and at www.nashua.com.]

Thomas Edison invented gummed paper tape in 1879. Charles Crowell, an entrepreneur and inventor, began operating a gummed-paper manufacturing enterprise in Rockport, Mass. When the firm faltered in 1898, he sold it to Carter, Rice & Co. of Boston. The new owners renamed their subsidiary Winthrop Manufacturing Co. In February, 1904, fire destroyed the plant and that led to the founding of Nashua Card & Paper Co., now known as Nashua Corp., in Nashua, N.H.

In 1906, Charles Crowell left Nashua Corp. and joined two partners in founding Lang & Gros in Bush Terminal, Brooklyn, N.Y. In 1916, Charles Crowell went blind. By that time, he had bought out his partners' interest in the Brooklyn, N.Y., company.

In 1921, Crowell moved the plant to Yorklyn, Del., close to Joseph Bancroft and Sons, a company that bleached and finished cotton greige goods (unbleached or undyed textiles) and clay-filled them. Crowell coated the fabrics with animal glue and slit them into tape for the manufacturer's joint of corrugated boxes. The development of box-maker's tape and sealing tape was concurrent with the development of the corrugated box.

In the 1930s, Charles Crowell invented a less expensive way of making box tape, as compared to applying the glue coat to the clay-filled fabric. He laminated a sheet of paper to one side of the greige goods and applied the glue coat to it. The cloth gave strength to the tape and the paper lamination eliminated the need for clay-filling.

In the 1940's Crowell refused a license to make sisal tape. (Sisal or sisal hemp plants yield a stiff fiber used in making rope.) The company's market share declined, but World War II provided a market for its cloth tape. After the war, Crowell's market share once again declined and, although the company accepted a license to make sisal tape, the decline continued. In December 1952, Crowell shut the plant.

On February 1, 1952, the Adelman family purchased the defunct Crowell Corp. The Yorklyn facility consisted of three stories and a basement. A 42-in. wide coater ran through four levels of the plant. Paper arrived by rail car and took several days to unload with a hand truck. Most of the equipment that came with the transaction was antique and the wooden floors and low archways in the factory did not permit the use of forklifts.

The gumming machine built into the Yorklyn facility could not be materially improved. Workers carried glue by hand in galvanized buckets from cooking kettles to the glue pan. The gummer operator would run his fingernail in the wet glue coat as the only means of determining the glue-coat weight.

How well this skill-dependent process worked was amazing. Despite its aging plant and equipment, The Crowell Corp. was the first company in the industry and the first company in Delaware to become a licensee of the Atomic Energy Commission.

When I came to Crowell in 1952, the employees drank water from a galvanized bucket with a ladle. The installation of water coolers provided a level of improvement that is difficult to overstate.

For a second time in the history of the company, fire played a major role in stimulating change. In December, 1964, at 11:30 a.m., the Yorklyn plant caught fire due to an electrical short. Fueled by the large amount of paper in the building and the facility's wooden structure, the fire burned for a month.

The same evening the fire started, we leased an office in downtown Wilmington. Within two weeks, we leased a warehouse in Wilmington, and bought finished goods from a competitor. A short time later, we purchased a splitter and converted semi-manufactured goods.

Next, we bought in excess of five acres in Newport, Del., south of Wilmington, and built a new plant. We moved the business into it in September, 1965. Eventually, we acquired the most modern laminating and coating equipment.

Today, processing takes place in an up-to-date, one-story facility that contains three major coating/laminators that are 60-in. or 72-in. wide and run web speeds approaching 1,000 feet per minute. [Is one coating/laminator 60-in. and two are 72-in. or are two coating/laminators 60-in. and one is 72-in.?] The Crowell Corp. operates three shifts in its current plant, which is accessible by rail or truck. The factory also has easy access to the shipping ports of Baltimore, Philadelphia and New Jersey.

The first order we Adelmans received in 1952 was for 100 bundles of 60-lb. paper tape, which took us four days to manufacture and deliver. At the time, it was the only order in the house. Today, it is common for us to ship in excess of 5,000 cartons per day.

In the 1970s, pressure-sensitive tape was approved for the shipment of corrugated boxes. This threatened the gummed-tape industry. We could either choose to make pressure-sensitive tape, ignore the threat, or develop a new product. At the time, a 2 x 55-yd. roll of gummed tape sold for \$3.50. While the demand for the product grew, so did discounting.

We set out to develop a new product, one that would have more packaging functions than any other. Sleeping with a note pad on the dresser next to my bed, getting up in the

middle of the night and jotting down ideas for this new product (most of which, upon awakening in the morning, I deemed silly, and then rejected), and having a note pad in my pocket, as well as in the console of my car, eventually CRO-NEL®, a paper/foam packaging material with cohesive coating on the foam side, was born and patented.

My major oversight was that no one knew CRO-NEL existed and, therefore, there was no demand for it. To overcome this major obstacle, we hired Jerry Kipnees and Chuck Falkner in sales and marketing. Before long, we had to buy equipment dedicated to the manufacture of CRO-NEL; NYVEL®, a line of cohesively-coated kraft paper and films, and NYVEL® P[superscript the P], a lamination of paper and polypropylene film.

I would like to cite a number of the proudest accomplishments of The Crowell Corp.:

- 1962 – Hired the industry’s first saleswoman
- 1964 – Rallied after plant fire
- 1968 – Had the opportunity to honor Jeannette Henter for 60 years of continuous service to our company
- 1969 – Received a citation by the Community Chest for having the greatest percentage increase in contributions of any company in Delaware
- 1970 – Built a reinforcing laminator in six months, a feat any sane person would have known could not be accomplished
- 1973 – Honored Bud Beck for selling \$1 million worth of Crowell product in one year
- 1978 – Hired a woman truck driver
- 1988 – Accepted a citation by then Delaware Governor Castle for having been chosen the State’s number-one small business exporter of the year
- 1992 – Earned the Blue Chip Enterprise Initiative Award sponsored by Connecticut Mutual Life Insurance Co., the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and *Nations Business* magazine
- Over the years, have been asked by the following organizations to speak on the topic of exporting: Women in Business, Governors International Trade Council, the University of Delaware and the World Trade Center
- Traveled internationally to meet new customers and secure a licensee to manufacture CRO-NEL (cohesive) in Japan
- Withstood the industry trend away from gummed tape – Whereas 31 gummed-tape manufacturers operated in the U.S. in 1952, three exist in 2006.
- Won a number of national awards for the design of the company’s letterhead

We also had the good fortune to hire Ray Hajek in 1998. As national sales manager, he is now responsible for our sales and marketing. Ironically, our gummed-tape business continues to grow.

It is difficult to encapsulate 100 years of Crowell history and 54 years of my own experience in a short article. Nevertheless, the most rewarding event in my tenure at Crowell has been to have my son Robert and daughter Joan choose to work with me. They are extremely able, and they are capable of taking The Crowell Corp. to the next generation.

THE FOLLOWING COPY WILL GO IN A SIDEBAR, a boxed and shaded portion of the article:

Products from The Crowell Corporation

Gummed Sealing Tapes

SAMSON® – High-grade three-way reinforced sealing tapes

NEWPORT® – Mid-grade three-way reinforced sealing tapes

SUPERSEAL [Is this product trademarked?] – Economy-grade three-way reinforced sealing tapes

TUFFTAPE® – Easy-to-use gummed paper sealing tapes with no reinforcement

Cold-Seal Packaging Materials

CRO-NEL® – Versatile paper/foam packaging material with cohesive coating on the foam side

CRO-NEL® Plus – Cohesive film/foam construction, which is cushioned, strong, flexible and recyclable

NY-VEL® – Cohesively-coated kraft paper and films

NYVEL® P – Lamination of paper and polypropylene film used to package soft goods with automated machinery

Corrugated Box Tapes

CROWLOK® in #200 All-Purpose Natural; #200 All-Purpose, White; #300 Regular Natural; #300 Regular White; #400 Extra-Heavy Natural, and #400 Extra-Heavy White

Equipment

CRO-NEL Packer Model CS-318 automatic cold-seal packaging system

THE SIDE BAR ENDS HERE.

CAPTIONS:



Pictured in this 1953 photograph is the newest section of the Yorklyn, Del., building, built in 1902 and originally powered by a water wheel with flat belts running in the ceiling. The rear section of the building dates back to 1849. The George W. Helme Co., a snuff manufacturer, owned the original building. The B&O Railroad delivered coal and paper to the plant. A 10-alarm fire destroyed the Yorklyn factory in December, 1964.



The gumming machine, circa 1953 [Please check date.]



Herbert "Herb" Adelman, president, The Crowell Corp., 1953



The original cloth laminator – Cloth was laminated to paper and the paper side was coated with an adhesive. Later, when complaints arose regarding the splitting of the paper, Charles Crowell invented the fiber-filled process which pre-split the paper, and then calendered it to give it a smooth finish for gumming.
[What year was the photo taken?]



This building housed the coal-fired boiler.
[What year was the photo taken?]



(picture above) Center of building built prior to the Civil War
[What year was the photo taken?]



Bill Johnson with his 1958 International truck



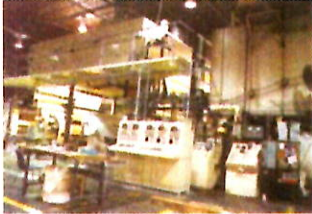
Workers slitting rolls of TUFFTAPE with the Kidder Slitter [What year was the photo taken?]



Joan and Robert "Bob" Adelman with the Blue Chip Enterprise Initiative Award, 1992



Coater 3 -- A Black Clawson 72-in., 1,000 fpm computerized coater with self-correcting capability



A small section of Coater 2 – Used for inline coating and laminating, computerized and featuring state-of-the-art electronics



Bob and Joan Adelman standing in front of Coater 2, Summer 2006



Herb Adelman and Ray Hajek, The Crowell Corp., with customer and friend Steve Miller, president, Hershey Paper Co., Lancaster, Pa., at the National Conference of THE UNITED GROUP, February 7, 2006